

MASSACHUSETTS  
- MANSFIELD

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# Other States

## Massachusetts Mansfield

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

*Haines, John W.*  
*Places Lincoln Visited*

1714 Fortuna Street  
Sarasota, Florida  
December 2, 1969

Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry  
Fort Wayne  
Indiana

Dear Gerald,

In your issue of LINCOLN LORE of August last you listed the places where Lincoln traveled.

I am taking the liberty of sending you a newspaper containing a talk I gave, September 18, 1948, before the Boston Lincoln Group concerning Lincoln's 1848 trip to New England. My talk covered that part of his trip which took him from Worcester to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he addressed an "attentive audience" so much so that "In fact he took the house right between wind and water" according to one local newspaper. I found other amusing quotes such as from an old diary "It was a pretty sound, but not a tasteful speech." Apparently racy, western wit was not admired by this individual.

I correctly identified the building in which he spoke, for which I received the thanks of the New Bedford Historical Society.

During the trip from Worcester to New Bedford, he stopped off in Mansfield, Massachusetts, while changing trains, and within the next eight days he visited its old "Passenger-House" three more times (twice en route to Taunton) so he came to know it well as he purchased his tickets from "Jim" Green, ticket agent who ran a general store and sold lunches and cider there.

I <sup>asked</sup> a sketch of his stop there to be made. I have the original which is 22" by 15" in size. It is much more attractive than the news print. I also have the plate that the news print was made from.

I am quite proud of my Lincoln Library--it contained in April, 1966, Seven Hundred Eighty-One (781) volumes which comply with the requirements of Jay Monaghan's bibliography and over five hundred (500) brochures and pamphlets. Also, about the same number of Civil War histories and a fine collection of other Americana. To these collections, I am always adding. Could I be rated as a collector? Amongst this Americana is a collection of several hundred histories of the United States Navy and other such maritime subjects.

Very sincerely yours,

*John W. Haines*  
John W. Haines

JWH:JHT

P.S. Ten years ago I came to Florida from Massachusetts.

432-4715  
743-0178

December 8, 1969

Mr. John W. Maines  
1714 Fortuna Street  
Sarasota, Florida

Dear Chief:

I was glad to have your letter of December 2nd and to learn that Lincoln visited Mansfield, Massachusetts and that there are some details connected with his visit. I am also glad to have the sketch that appeared in THE MANSFIELD NEWS on September 17, 1948. Your letter and sketch will go into our files.

From your description, you have a fine Lincoln collection and I would certainly rate you as a collector.

I still hear from Bert Sheldon. Remember when he got homesick while we traveled in Kentucky?

Yours sincerely,

R. Gerald McMurtry

RCM/cvrw



# CENTENARY OF LINCOLN VISIT TO MASS. REVEALS HE STOPPED HERE

**Paper To Be Read Before Lincoln Group In Boston  
Tomorrow By John Haines Reveals Cong. Lincoln  
Came To Mansfield Enroute To New Bedford—  
Old "Passenger House" Now Home of Gaffney  
Family.**

A hundred years ago Tuesday, while Massachusetts was running off a political dress rehearsal for the election of a president next November, Congressman Abraham Lincoln came to Mansfield to change trains for New Bedford, where political interests took him to espouse the cause of Zachary Taylor for the presidency.

That fact has been established by John W. Haines, long a student of the great emancipator president, in a paper which he will read before the distinguished Lincoln Group tomorrow afternoon in Boston as one feature in the program planned to mark the centenary of Lincoln's 10-day campaign of speech-making through eastern Massachusetts on behalf of nominee Taylor.

The Haines paper holds particular interest for all Mansfield because it brings to light, not only that Lincoln was a traveler who came to know Mansfield 100 years ago when it had only 1,500 in-

habitants but the "passenger house" which was then the railroad depot was moved in 1860 to 136 West street and is now the home of the Gaffney family.

The "passenger house" is the center section of the Gaffney place and has had several additions. It has had also many occupants for its two apartments since 1860. Prior to 1911, when the Gaffneys purchased the property, it was owned by the Wilbur family. Originally the land on which it stands was the Roland Green estate, and the house was surrounded by a white fence and boasted a considerable apple orchard.

Mr. Haines has suggested to the Rotary Club, of which he is a member, that consideration be given to the erection of a bronze plaque on the present Gaffney home as the "passenger depot" where Lincoln stopped to change trains on September 14, 1848.

Historians seem to be agreed on the point that the "passenger depot" of 1848 was located close to the present station, and was built in 1836.

Especially significant in the commemoration of the centenary tomorrow in Boston is the drawing made by Harry Chase of Beech street from notes provided by Mr. Haines. Among those who have seen the sketch before it was published for the first time in today's NEWS it is already marked as a masterpiece in its field.

Because of its Mansfield angle, THE NEWS prints in the following paragraphs, the paper which Mr. Haines will read tomorrow afternoon at the Parker House.

On board the 7:30 train when it left Worcester on the morning of Thursday, September 14, 1848, was that "very tall and thin" stranger from the "western country," who during the past two days had held the "untiring interest" of several audiences to whom he had spoken while attending the Whig State Convention in that city.

Thirty-nine years of age, Congressman Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, destined only a few short years later to be the savior of this nation, was making his first visit East. He came at the request of several prominent New England Whigs who had known him in Congress. They believed his western wit and quaint stories would make him an effective speaker for their presidential candidate, General Zachary Taylor, in the coming election.

When he left Worcester on this early morning train he was starting a ten-day speaking tour with New Bedford as his immediate destination. Enroute he had to change trains twice; first, at Providence, Rhode Island, where at 11:45 a.m. he boarded a train on the Boston and Providence Railroad bound for Mansfield, Massachusetts. Arriving there at about 12:30 p.m. he changed to the Taunton Branch Railroad.

Mansfield, a town of fifteen hundred inhabitants, was the terminus

of the latter-named railroad. Its Passenger-House (or depot) was a quaint two and a half story wooden affair. There "Jim" Green, Ticket Agent, ran a general store and sold lunches and cider as well as railroad tickets. Serving both railroads it was situated in a cow pasture, as the construction of the railroads was then opening up a

new section of the town. Nearby was a barn-like structure which served as engine house, and also the turntable of the Taunton Branch Railroad. Great quantities of wood were piled up along the tracks and seasoned men were always busy sawing it to proper lengths to serve the wood-burning engines of both railroads.

Rumford River flowing beside the tracks furnished these engines with their much needed water supply. Otherwise about him, the stranger was able to discern only a typical rural New England countryside.

This old Passenger-House is still standing although in 1860 it was moved to a new site (136 West street) and became a dwelling. But in 1848 Congressman Lincoln must have visited it and there in "Jim" Green's general store purchased his ticket to New Bedford. Within the next eight days he was to visit this old building three more times, so he came to know it well.

During that same late afternoon he arrived in New Bedford at the Pearl street depot of the New Bedford and Taunton Railroad. The following description of this depot is from the "Boston Atlas" of 1840:

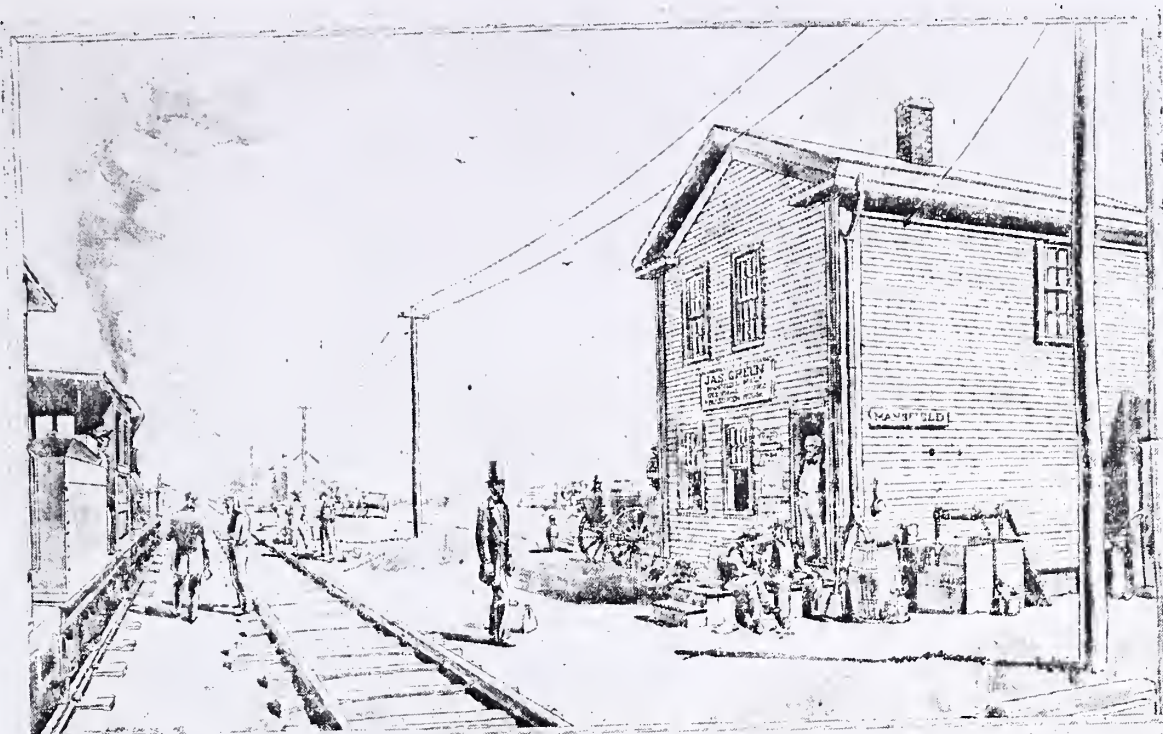
"The car house and ticket office is built in the Egyptian style of architecture, with ends in the imitation of the entrance of the catacombs, or the arches of gates. The appearance of the building is singularly odd and appropriate."

It was from this odd car-house that Mr. Lincoln obtained his first impression of New Bedford. This building has long since been destroyed.

He found a New Bedford of sixteen thousand inhabitants, one thousand of whom were colored. It had been incorporated as a city only the previous year. Beautifully situated on ground rising rapidly from the harbor and the Acushnet River, its 74 accepted streets were regularly laid out, several were paved and most of its sidewalks were of flagstone.

Purchase Street was the main business street. County street, upon the summit of the rising ground was its finest residential street and was said to be without rival in this country for fine shade trees, wealthy homes, and cultivated gardens.

MANSFIELD, MASS., FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1948



CONGRESSMAN LINCOLN OF ILLINOIS ARRIVES AT MANSFIELD, SEPT. 14, 1848, ON HIS TOUR OF MASSACHUSETTS.

**STRIKING SKETCH OF LINCOLN IN MANSFIELD** in 1848 was drawn by Harry Chase with remarkably accurate historical detail and fine line to commemorate the centennial of Cong. Abraham Lincoln's arrival here from Providence 100 years ago Tuesday enroute to New Bedford to make a political speech on behalf of Zachary Taylor's candidacy for president. Note woman in hoopskirts, engineer with watch in hand, woodpile which provided fuel for locomotives, and even an iron ring near the entrance to "passenger house" where a horse could be tethered.

Critics who have studied the sketch which Harry Chase of Beech street has drawn for the centennial of Abraham Lincoln's arrival in

Mansfield in 1848 to take a train to New Bedford call the drawing one of the finest works in existence.

The original has the rare accuracy of line, perspective and detail of a professional. We predict the sketch will create widespread interest, not alone among students of Lincoln, but among those who like the fine arts.



House (now the Free Public Library) known then as the "Town House & Public Market"—its lower floor was a market—its two upper floors housed the town offices, the Custom House a structure of granite which also served as the post office, and the old plain brick Court House. There were eighteen churches and twelve public school houses. Male school teachers averaged a monthly wage of \$32.11, females \$13.08, meals included.

The total expenditures of the city government in 1848 was \$122,339. The tax rate four years previously had been four dollars on the thousand.

The whale fishery and the manufacture of the product of that fishery were the principal industries. That year 250 whale ships hailed from New Bedford, and their tapering masts were outlined against the sky from the many wharfs along its harbor's edge. Nine years later saw the peak of this industry with a total of 329 ships claiming New Bedford as their home port. The Civil War hastened the end of this industry.

Second in importance among its industries was the Wamsutta Mills with ten thousand spindles in operation. Congressman Joseph Grinnell from the New Bedford District was owner of these mills and also President of the New Bedford and Taunton Railroad. As a colleague in Congress, he was acquainted with Congressman Lincoln.

Three newspapers were published in the city, one daily (the Mercury) and two weeklys. Upon arriving in New Bedford if Mr. Lincoln had purchased a copy of the Mercury for that morning he would have seen an announcement at the head of the editorial column on page two which read:

"Another Whig Rally" "Hon. A. Lincoln, member of Congress from Illinois, will address the Whigs of New Bedford at Liberty Hall this evening."

"The meeting will be called to order at 7. 1-2 o'clock precisely."

"Whigs of the neighboring towns are invited to join their brethren of New Bedford on this occasion."

T. B. White

Pres. of the New Bedford Whig Organization

This merely meant there would be "another" Whig Rally that evening in New Bedford. The chief speaker would be the "Hon. A. Lincoln" brought there through the influence of Judge Charles H. Warren, a delegate and speaker at the Worcester convention.

To a few, Mr. Lincoln's reputation as a lawyer and as an Illinois Representative was slightly known, but to the majority he was just another politician, and being from the West hardly added to his prestige. Liberty Hall, where he was to speak, was located on the northwest corner of Purchase and William streets in the Public Market. The building built in 1795 was originally a Congregational Church and was used by that society until 1838. Then the old building was sold and became "Liberty Hall." It was used for lectures, political meetings, and entertainments. Several additions were made and about

there. Such great orators as William L. Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Frederick Douglas, and Henry Ward Beecher spoke there. It was destroyed by fire in 1854.

Only one of his early biographers makes any reference to Mr. Lincoln's coming to New Bedford. Henry J. Raymond in his "Life and Public Service of Abraham Lincoln" says, "The journals of the day note his presence at the Massachusetts State Convention during his brief visit to New England, and speak in terms of highest praise of an address which he delivered at New Bedford."

Just what he actually said there we do not know. Stenographers then did not take shorthand notes and he himself left no copy, but in the files of the "Daily Mercury" for Friday morning, September 15, 1848, on page two we find the following under the heading:

"Ratification Meeting in New Bedford."

"Last evening a large and enthusiastic Whig meeting was held in Liberty Hall. T. B. White, Esq., President, was in the chair to hear the report of the delegates to the Whig Convention. The delegates were reported by their chairman J. H. W. Page, Esq., who gave a glowing and enthusiastic and cheering account of the doings of the Convention. The report of the members, character and action, enthusiasm, hope and confidence of the Convention was received with joy and unbounded applause."

Every true Whig's heart was cheered and encouraged, every true Whig resolved to do his whole duty in support of the regular nominations of the State and National Conventions.

After closing his report, Mr. Page, before introducing the orator of the evening, gave way in order to learn the pleasure of the meeting.

Thereupon Hon. Joseph Grinnell introduced the following resolution:

"Resolved, that the Whigs of New Bedford cordially approve of, and respond to, the nominations made by the Whig State Convention at Worcester and pledge themselves to use their utmost endeavors, by all fair and honorable means, to secure the election of the nominees."

The resolution was adopted by a unanimous and thundering Aye.

Mr. Page, chairman of the Executive Committee, then introduced the Hon. Abraham Lincoln, member of Congress from Illinois, who had kindly yielded to the earnest solicitations of the committee to come from Worcester to address our citizens. Mr. Lincoln enchaind the attention of a delighted audience for nearly two hours.

His speech covered the whole ground of the national election and was marked by great originality—clear, conclusive, convincing reasoning, and enlivened by frequent flashes of genuine racy western wit.

We have rarely seen a more attentive audience. In fact he took his house right between wind and water, and made a most admirable and effective speech, which cannot

for that honest old man and tried patriot, as well as soldier, Zachary Taylor." "The committee deserves and will receive the thanks of the Whigs of New Bedford for securing the services of Mr. Lincoln." "After Mr. Lincoln finished his address, the audience gave him three cheers and repeated with rousing cheers for Taylor and Fillmore."

With the above, the Daily Mercury's account of this meeting ended. Even if its editorial column had not daily carried the heading:

"For President, Zachary Taylor; For Vice President, Millard Fillmore; For Governor, George N. Briggs; For Lieutenant Governor, John Reed," to have read the above account of this Whig Rally would have left little doubt as to where its sympathies and support lay. If correctly reported, Congressman Lincoln's "effective speech" was not necessary to arouse that meeting, as unrestrained enthusiasm reigned from start to finish that evening.

In the library of the New Bedford Genealogical Society can be found the following entry in the diary of Samuel Rodman, a prominent young businessman of that city. "Sept. 14—In the evg. (evening) went to the Whig meeting, which was addressed by Mr. Lincoln of Illinois. It was a pretty sound, but not a tasteful speech."

Apparently, "racy western wit" was not admired by this Quaker-minded personage.

Following the meeting, Congressman Lincoln was entertained and spent the night in the stone mansion of his wealthy and aristocratic colleague, Joseph Grinnell, up on the hill on County street. Grinnell had long been famous for lavish entertaining and the sumptuous banquets he served his guests. Here the young western lawyer and congressman saw and came into intimate contact with the eastern aristocrat at his best.

The Grinnell mansion is still standing on its original site on residential County street.


On the following morning (Sept. 15th) Mr. Lincoln left New Bedford enroute to Boston. This trip carried him back through Mansfield to the Boston and Providence Railroad and as he emerged from the portals of that railroad's Boston depot on Pleasant street, near the foot of the Common, he obtained his first view of that city.

In the November election that year 1848, New Bedford cast 2,170 votes. Of these 1,111 were for Taylor, 618 for Van Buren, 438 for Cass, and three scattering. The Whig plurality thus was 493 votes, but Taylor had only a majority of 52 over all others. Massachusetts gave Taylor a satisfactory plurality with Van Buren running second—an indication of the strong free-soil sentiment.

Twelve years later, Congressman Lincoln was himself, a Presidential candidate and without doubt many New Bedford voters recalled with interest and pride that they heard him speak, although few could recall what he said that evening in old Liberty Hall.





Home > Norton Mirror > Opinion & Letters >  RSS Feed

## Chase: Lincoln's travels through Mansfield

By Harry Chase/ Guest Columnist

Friday, April 28, 2006

At about 12:30 on the afternoon of Sept. 14, 1848, a treetop-tall, clean-shaven, bushy-haired man got off a Boston-bound train at Mansfield depot. The man was a 39-year-old Whig politician from Illinois, serving the final year of his term as Congressman. He was campaigning in Massachusetts and Rhode Island for presidential candidate Zachary Taylor, and had just come from making a speech in Providence. His name was Abraham Lincoln.

The name meant nothing to anyone in Mansfield. That included station agent James Greene. The agent, who kept a close eye on arriving passengers, watched from his doorway as the tall stranger tromped across the plant platform, a carpetbag swinging from his big hand.

Mansfield's passenger house, as it was called, stood exactly on the site of the present MBTA commuter station. There the similarity ended. It was a two-and-a-half story white-painted clapboard structure of Greek Revival style. (It still stands in Mansfield but on a different spot.) Green and his family lived upstairs.

Jim Greene, age 42, was more than a railroad agent. He had charge of the telegraph installed in the depot seven months before. He also ran a general store in the building, and served lunches and cider made from his own apples. Like all who came in daily contact with the public, he was a practiced judge of men. But he didn't quite know what to make of the new arrival. Lincoln quickly solved that little problem. He asked Greene for a ticket to New Bedford.

Probably the response went something like, "Sure, mister. That'll be 90 cents. Takes an hour and five minutes, with four stops. You comin' back today?"

Lincoln said he'd be back tomorrow. He had a speaking date in Boston.

Nobody knows whether Abe Lincoln filled his 20-minute wait at Mansfield by partaking of Jim Greene's luncheon and cider. But I can picture Greene grinning in amusement as the stranger after boarding the New Bedford train behind the depot, folded his gangly six-feet-three-and-a-half inches into a seat designed for the 19th century man of five-feet-seven. Some day they'd have to make train seats bigger!

During his 12-day New England tour, Lincoln gave political speeches in Worcester, Providence, New Bedford, Boston, Lowell, Dedham, Cambridge, Dorchester (where Democrats heaved sticks and stones at him) and Taunton, traveling by train between stops. The Taunton address, on Sept. 21, came last; from Boston he took a train back to Mansfield, thence to Taunton, where he spoke in Union Hall, returning via Mansfield to Boston the following day.

I don't know what Jim Greene's political persuasion was but by the time Abraham Lincoln passed through his station four times Greene must have felt the tall Whig Congressman from Illinois, future 16th president of the United States, was getting to be an old friend.

Lifelong Mansfield resident Harry B. Chase Jr. served on the town's first Conservation Commission and is a founding and charter member of the Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield. He can be reached at [mansfield@cnc.com](mailto:mansfield@cnc.com).

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1843  
1844  
1845



